

General Election 2017

The Top 25 Candidates to Watch: Volume II

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 CICERO

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A Cicero Group overview

After very high levels of interest in our initial [‘Top 25 Candidates to Watch’](#), we decided to cast the net a little wider still and upgrade to a ‘Top 50’, of which this is the second volume.

Once again we present a mix of potential rising stars, notable former MPs attempting comebacks, and candidates who could cause upsets in long-safe seats. Whereas in our first volume we focused strongly on seats we think very likely to change hands, some of our selections here are perhaps more on a knife-edge. If some of the candidates listed here are successful, it will be a good indicator that their party is in for a good night – but of course, the reverse is also true.

Until very recently, this was not an election at which too many people were seriously entertaining the possibility of many Labour gains. However the party’s gradual narrowing of the Conservative lead, and the current modelling from YouGov which surprisingly suggests the Tories may in fact lose seats, means we should not dismiss the possibility of some blue seats turning red. We have picked out some of the seats to watch in this regard, including Brighton Kemptown where the incumbent City Minister Simon Kirby may be under threat.

For the Lib Dems, this has so far not been the campaign they might have hoped for, with polling suggesting their position looks set to remain relatively stagnant. Nevertheless, there are individual seats where they will have high hopes of making gains. One such example is in Bermondsey and Old Southwark where former Minister and Deputy Leader Simon Hughes hopes to recapture his old seat. If he does so he will hope to see a number of former colleagues also returning to the green benches alongside him.

In Scotland, there are by definition few opportunities for the SNP to make gains, having won all but three seats last time around. Nevertheless there is one notable Labour scalp they could still take – Ian Murray in Edinburgh South, the last island of red in once-Labour Scotland. MSP Jim Eadie hopes to achieve this feat, though Murray is a dogged campaigner and will be tough to beat.

The Greens have relatively low expectations at this election, hoping to retain Caroline Lucas’s Brighton Pavilion, and looking to Bristol West as their best shot at doubling this representation. Molly Scott Cato MEP is their candidate seeking to earn this distinction.

Overall however, the Conservatives remain the party still expecting to make the most gains on June 8. In this document we pick out some of the candidates contesting seats that would represent landmark victories for the Tory party, such as the possibility of Owen Meredith turning Newcastle-under-Lyme blue for the first time in a century. Others are selected due to their past Parliamentary credentials, strong business backgrounds or government connections as former Special Advisers.

We hope that you will find this further selection of 25 candidates to watch a useful guide. We certainly look forward to seeing how many of our 50 selections make it to Westminster after June 8.



Simon Fitzpatrick
Account Director



Joe Moor
Account Manager



Chris Hughes
Account Executive

Candidates to watch



Sir Simon Hughes Bermondsey and Old Southwark

Lib Dem grandee seeking comeback

2015 result: Labour majority (4,489)
Incumbent MP: Neil Coyle
EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Having represented the area for 32 years, Hughes lost this seat to Labour in 2015 but he is now hoping the anti-Corbyn incumbent will be ousted in his favour.

Aided by his Lib Dem liveried hackney carriage, he is well known in the constituency. He is also a Party grandee; having been their Deputy Leader, a longterm frontbench spokesman (Home Affairs, and Energy and Climate Change), a Coalition Minister and even a leadership contender.

As a former barrister specialising in civil liberties, he was the obvious person to have this brief within MoJ during the Coalition years. Since leaving Westminster he has acted as Head of Public Affairs at the Open University.



John Lamont Berwickshire Roxburgh and Selkirk

Ruth Davidson's former enforcer

2015 result: SNP majority (328)
Incumbent MP: Calum Kerr
EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

The son of a farmer, Lamont is the former MSP for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire having resigned his seat in May to focus on the general election.

Known within Holyrood as a safe pair of hands and a solid operator, he was previously Ruth Davidson's Chief Whip and Business Manager.

Before entering politics, he worked as a solicitor at both Freshfields and Brodies; having gambled his political career on winning this seat, it may be a career he's forced to return to.



Lloyd Russell- Moyle Brighton, Kemptown

One of Labour's opportunities to gain a seat

2015 result: Conservative majority (690)
Incumbent MP: Simon Kirby
EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

A win for Russell-Moyle could make him one of a very few Labour MPs to mark a gain for their Party come June.

Seeking to defeat the current City Minister Simon Kirby, this seat can be regarded as ultra-marginal, especially as the remain-supporting Kirby is not expected to benefit much from the already low UKIP vote and as the Greens are not fielding a candidate meaning their vote could go red.

Russell-Moyle may also benefit from his status as a local Councillor. Away from politics, he has a masters in International Law and has previously worked as a consultant to the UN.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Caroline Moon Chorley

Local lady looks to oust popular Deputy Speaker

2015 result: Labour majority (4,530)

Incumbent MP: Lindsay Hoyle

EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

Currently a Borough Councillor in South Ribble, Moon is currently self-employed and has spent the past 10 years fostering children with complex needs.

She is also a Director, with her husband, of a commercial gardens and grounds maintenance firm, and chairs the Board of Governors for a school in her local area.

Initially working in the probation service, specifically in Prisons in Lancashire, having gained a degree in Law from the University of Central Lancashire, she has also worked as a Housing Office in local government.



Molly Scott Cato (MEP) Bristol West

Popular Green MEP could do well in heavily remain supporting constituency

2015 result: Labour majority (5,673)

Incumbent MP: Thangam

Debbonaire

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Cato is the current MEP for the South West England having been elected in 2014, and is a member of the Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and a substitute member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

She previously pursued a career as an academic specialising in the 'green economy'. This is not her first Parliamentary election in the UK but perhaps her best chance yet; the seat that turned from yellow to red only two years ago, could now go green on the back of her local popularity and a collapse in the Lib Dem vote.



Jeremy Newmark Finchley and Golders Green

Prominent figure in the Jewish community seeking to regain seat for Labour

2015 result: Conservative majority (5,662)

Incumbent MP: Mike Freer

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Previously Margaret Thatcher's turf, chair of the Jewish Labour Movement, Jeremy Newmark, has been selected to stand in the area, the constituency with the highest percentage of Jewish voters in the country.

Newmark has served as the Chief Executive of the Jewish Leadership Council, and as a spokesperson to the previous UK Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks. He is also the chair of the Labour party in Hertsmere. If elected he will become the first Orthodox Jew in the House of Commons. Labour will be hoping claims of failing to tackle anti-Semitism in the party do not damage hopes of reclaiming the seat they held from 1997-2010.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Robert Largan Bury South

25 years of Labour in Bury South could come to an end

2015 result: Labour majority (4,922)
Incumbent MP: Ivan Lewis
EU Referendum Vote: *Unknown*

Robert Largan works as a chartered accountant and will be seeking to represent the constituency he calls home. He has worked for Greg Hands MP and most recently has served as a local councillor where he now lives in Hammersmith and Fulham.

He also serves as Governor of a local primary school. He is 29 years old.



Anna McMorris Cardiff North

Former Welsh Government adviser looks to make the step up

2015 result: Conservative majority (2,137)
Incumbent MP: Craig Williams
EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

McMorris was formerly a Special Advisor in the Welsh Government to Wales' Natural Resources Minister, Alun Davies from 2008 to 2014. Since then she has worked as a public affairs consultant.

She has also had spells as a communications officer at Labour HQ and as a Campaigns and Communications Director at not-for profit organisation, Friends of the Earth.



Matthew Maxwell Scott Carshalton and Wallington

Another Lib Dem seat vulnerable to the attack

2015 result: Lib Dem majority (1,510)
Incumbent MP: Tom Brake
EU Referendum Vote: *Unknown*

Maxwell Scott is the Director of Access to Justice, a campaign group for injured people.

He has worked as a speechwriter for the director-general of the BBC, and the CBI, as well as in government relations for Slater and Gordon, and External Comms at the insurance group, RSA. Before moving to Carshalton, he was a local councillor in Wandsworth where he is originally from.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Resham Kotecha Coventry North West

Young candidate to gain from a Midlands shift to the Tories?

2015 result: Labour majority (4,509)

Incumbent MP: Geoffrey Robinson

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Kotecha is a financial analyst who has worked at the Financial Services Authority, as an Economic Advisor to former MP Brooks Newmark, and is the Head of Engagement for Women2Win.

She previously stood in Dulwich and West Norwood in the 2015 General Election and serves as the Deputy Chair of Northwood Conservatives.



Michelle Lowe Coventry South

Veteran Labour MP could be vulnerable

2015 result: Labour majority (3,188)

Incumbent MP: Jim Cunningham

EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

Lowe is the Deputy Leader of Sevenoaks District Council, and has been a councillor for a decade.

She has worked as a Marketing Communications specialist for a variety of not-for-profit organisations and she previously stood in the 2015 General Election in Coventry North East.



Beth Prescott Dewsbury

Young charity campaigner seeks to re-win a former Tory seat

2015 result: Labour majority (1,451)

Incumbent MP: Paula Sherriff

EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

Prescott will be standing in her hometown constituency, having previously stood in Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford against Yvette Cooper in the 2015 General Election at the age of just 22.

She is a donor development campaign manager for a poverty-relief charity. She has also been a former apprentice and supermarket worker. A licensed Christian preacher, she is also the creator of the #workingclasstories hashtag.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Nick De Bois Enfield North

Former influential MP could reclaim closely contested seat.

2015 result: Labour majority (1,086)
Incumbent MP: Joan Ryan
EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

De Bois was previously the MP for Enfield North from 2010-2015 before losing his seat at the 2015 General Election.

Before he lost his seat, he was very well liked within the party and had been secretary of the influential backbench Conservative Party 1922 Committee. Before being an MP he ran a marketing communications company.



Carolyn Abbott Gedling

Fifth time lucky for Abbott?

2015 result: Labour majority (2,986)
Incumbent MP: Vernon Coaker
EU Referendum Vote: *Unknown*

She previously worked in the financial sector, but most recently Abbott has served as the Director of a wrought iron work business that she runs with her husband.

She has stood in the last four general elections, and the European Parliament elections in 2014.

On this occasion she is seeking to oust Vernon Coaker, a popular figure on the Labour benches, who has held the seat for 20 years and is a former Shadow Defence Secretary. His defeat would be a sign of a bad night for Labour.



Carl Jackson Hartlepool

After half a century, Brexit voting town could finally go blue.

2015 result: Labour majority (3,024)
Incumbent MP: Iain Wright (retiring)
EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

This 32 year Oxford graduate has a lot of experience under his belt. Having initially qualified as a solicitor at Slaughter and May, where he specialised in international litigation and project finance, he spent time in Brussels working on competition law and also acted as a policy adviser to Brexit Secretary David Davis prior to the 2010 general election.

Now a Councillor on Chiltern District Council and a Director at Management Consultancy, MSB, Jackson also works with charities that provide transport assistance to disabled people. If he can manage to inherit some of the UKIP vote in the constituency and capitalise on Iain Wright's decision not to stand for re-election, this seat could go blue for the first time.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Kirsty Adams Hove

Fiercely contested marginal that could go either way

2015 result: Labour majority (1,236)

Incumbent MP: Peter Kyle

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Adams co-owns a design company, and is also a Bedford Borough Councillor, and Conservative Area Chair for Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

She has been a Director of a learning board responsible for overseeing a number of schools, and is a campaigner against modern slavery.



Lee Scott Ilford North

A rare Tory casualty in 2015, Scott's colleagues would be pleased to see him return

2015 result: Labour majority (589)

Incumbent MP: Wes Streeting

EU Referendum Vote: *Unknown*

Previously the MP for this seat (2005-15), having ruled out contesting another election Lee Scott is said to have reconsidered his position after receiving a large number of letters and emails from former constituents urging him to do so.

He has previously been a member of the Transport and Health Committees, and was PPS to Philip Hammond before resigning in 2010 over the rise in tuition fees.

Prior to his election, he worked in sales for Toshiba, before acting as Campaign Director for the United Jewish Israel Appeal and as a fundraiser for a number of charities.



Owen Meredith Newcastle-under-Lyme

The Tories' chance to turn a constituency blue for the first time in a century

2015 result: Labour majority (650)

Incumbent MP: Paul Farrelly

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Well known in Conservative circles and a staunch activist, Meredith once worked for Jeremy Lefroy MP and is currently Director of External Affairs at the Professional Publishers Association.

He has been involved in the Europhile Tory Reform Group and was a longstanding member of Conservative Future, the Conservative's youth group.

Originally from the area, Meredith has said he's determined to get the best deal for Brexit which will likely involve expressing concerns at anything he views as too extreme.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Lee Rowley North East Derbyshire

A rounded individual with experience of local government, financial services and think tanks

2015 result: Labour majority (1,883)

Incumbent MP: Natascha Engel

EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

Rowley contested this seat in 2015 and increased the Conservative's share of the vote while reducing Labour's majority to a record low.

Derbyshire born, he developed a career in financial services when working at Santander and also served as a Westminster Councillor, where he acted as Cabinet Member for Transport. He has contributed to work undertaken by the Centre for Social Justice on welfare and housing.



Lana Hemsall Norwich South

Registered as blind and with public and private experience, Hemsall has a lot to offer Westminster

2015 result: Labour majority (7,659)

Incumbent MP: Clive Lewis

EU Referendum Vote: *Unknown*

Lana Hemsall takes on Clive Lewis in a battle the Conservatives never previously thought they might win.

This local Councillor is a former physiotherapist and passionate about the NHS, but has more recently worked with her husband helping SMEs in the energy sector. An Official Speaker for, as well as registered user of, Guide Dogs for the Blind, her personal experience of visual impairment will make her a valuable asset to the disability lobby.

She previously contested Denton and Reddish in the 2015 General Election.



Paul Holmes Southampton Test

A case study of the traditional route to parliament

2015 result: Labour majority (3,810)

Incumbent MP: Dr Alan Whitehead

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

One of several special advisers standing for Parliament, Holmes is taking the professional route to Parliament.

Since graduating in 2009 with a degree in Politics, he has acted as a parliamentary adviser to Stephen Hammond, a councillor and cabinet member on Southampton City Council, and, most recently, Special Adviser to Party Chairman Patrick McLoughlin.

He contested the Mitcham and Morden seat in 2015 and worked for a year for a communications agency in London.

Candidates to watch (contd)



Claire Young Thornbury and Yate

**Former IT professional with
interest in energy policy**

2015 result: Conservative majority
(1,495)

Incumbent MP: Luke Hall

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

Claire Young is the Lib Dems' best hope at retaking the seat Steve Webb lost in 2015. She has been a local Councillor for a decade and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat group since 2011.

Prior to becoming a councillor, she worked in the software industry with computer giant IBM and time spent in Silicon Valley and with SMEs.

She studied mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge, and has said her main policy interests revolve around environmental issues and energy.



Andrew Atkinson Wrexham

**The very definition of 'local boy
made good'**

2015 result: Labour majority
(1,831)

Incumbent MP: Ian Lucas

EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

Born and raised in Wrexham, Atkinson left school at 16, started his own business at 17 and has successfully nurtured it into a successful contract cleaning company operating in the area.

The very definition of 'local boy made good', he has also founded a not-for-profit business networking club and been an elected member of Hereford Council.



Tomos Davies Ynys Môn

**A fiercely proud Welsh speaking
Welshman**

2015 result: Labour majority (229)

Incumbent MP: Albert Owen

EU Referendum Vote: **Leave**

A former civil servant in the Wales Office, as well as serving as a Special Adviser to two Secretaries of State for Wales (Stephen Crabb and Alun Cairns), Davies is a dedicated Welshman with a readymade Whitehall network.

He currently works at a communications agency and focuses on providing policy advice on energy and environmental related issues.



James Eadie (MSP) Edinburgh South

**The SNP's best chance of
dismissing Labour from
Scotland**

2015 result: Labour majority
(2,637)

Incumbent MP: Ian Murray

EU Referendum Vote: **Remain**

The SNP's best chance of eradicating Labour's representation north of the border, Eadie was the MSP for the area from 2011-16, during which time has acted as Convener of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee (2014-16) and as an advocate of LGBT rights.

Formerly head of the Scottish branch of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, he has previously worked for the Royal College of Nursing and for Scottish Television at Westminster.

Marginal Constituencies and MPs standing down

Marginal Constituencies

To learn more about the most marginal constituencies at this General Election, visit [Cicero Elections \(www.ciceroelections.com\)](http://www.ciceroelections.com) to read our analysis of the 30 seats in the country with the most slender majorities. Our analysis is available [here](#).

MPs standing down

Name	Party	Constituency
Graham Allen	Labour	Nottingham North
David Anderson	Labour	Blaydon
Tom Blenkinsop	Labour	Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland
Andy Burnham	Labour	Leigh
Simon Burns	Conservative	Chelmsford
Douglas Carswell	Independent	Clacton
Pat Doherty	Sinn Féin	West Tyrone
Jim Dowd	Labour	Lewisham West and Penge
Michael Dugher	Labour	Barnsley East
Edward Garnier	Conservative	Harborough
Patricia Glass	Labour	North West Durham
Alan Haselhurst	Conservative	Saffron Walden
Gerald Howarth	Conservative	Aldershot
Alan Johnson	Labour	Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle
Peter Lilley	Conservative	Hitchin and Harpenden
Karen Lumley	Conservative	Redditch
David Mackintosh	Conservative	Northampton South
Fiona Mactaggart	Labour	Slough
Rob Marris	Labour	Wolverhampton South West
Natalie McGarry	Independent	Glasgow East
George Osborne	Conservative	Tatton
Eric Pickles	Conservative	Brentwood and Ongar
John Pugh	Liberal Democrat	Southport
Steve Rotherham	Labour	Liverpool Walton
Andrew Smith	Labour	Oxford East
Gisela Stuart	Labour	Birmingham, Edgbaston
Michelle Thomson	Independent	Edinburgh West
Andrew Turner	Conservative	Isle of Wight
Andrew Tyrie	Conservative	Chichester
Angela Watkinson	Conservative	Hornchurch and Upminster
Iain Wright	Labour	Hartlepool



Cicero Group is an integrated communications agency principally owned by directors and staff. We deliver our award-winning full service capability across all major business sectors from our wholly owned office network in London, Brussels, New York and Singapore.



Communications and PR expertise

Cicero has integrated corporate communications running through its core. We help our clients communicate in a complex world with

a wide-range of external audiences, from the media and investment community through to bloggers and the general public. The most recurring phrase in client feedback about Cicero is 'trusted to deliver'. It is the mantra around which we build all our corporate communications work.



Public affairs

Cicero's public affairs practice has built an award winning reputation for delivering results whatever the political complexion of government. Our team combines sound political judgement and market and policy

expertise to help clients navigate challenging regulatory landscapes across the UK, EU and at the supranational level.



Political monitoring and intelligence

Novares, Cicero's market-leading public policy intelligence tool, is the foundation of our monitoring and intelligence offering. Services we

provide include:

- Bespoke monthly issue-tracking grids;
- In-depth analysis of set-piece events; and
- Verbal consultant reports and under-the-radar intelligence based on Cicero's wide contact base with Government, Parliament, Whitehall, regulators, think-tanks, and industry sources.



Digital

For a communications strategy to be successful in today's world of 24-hour media, integration with digital media is essential, particularly through social media. Cicero's digital team

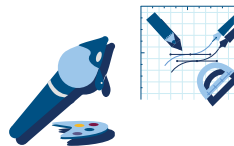
has worked with leading financial services organisations, including GE and Invesco Perpetual, to deliver digital media monitoring, consultancy and execution to ensure effective delivery of key messages online.



Thought leadership

Cicero has managed thought leadership projects since 2000. In overseeing every aspect of the project, from initial questionnaire

design through to results, analysis and reporting, we attempt to ensure that the client is able to generate as many outcomes as possible. Cicero has previously undertaken thought leadership projects for organisations including HSBC, AXA, Scottish Widows and HM Treasury.



Design

In a world where design is playing an ever increasing role in the success of businesses and companies, we recognise that

communication needs to be clear, quick and simple. Our corporate background means we see the bigger picture and can integrate design throughout the process. We implement communication strategies in new and engaging ways, while managing your reputation through clear and consistent design.

Contact us

Please contact Joe Moor with any further questions.

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